

THE UNITED STATES  
ADVISORY COMMISSION  
ON  
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



REPORT  
1980

**Public diplomacy** is a new label for an old concept. It supplements and reinforces traditional intergovernmental diplomacy, seeking to strengthen mutual understanding between peoples through a wide variety of international communication and educational and cultural exchange programs. The principal agency charged with the conduct of American public diplomacy around the world is the International Communication Agency. The Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is responsible for advising and overseeing the work of the International Communication Agency (USICA).

The work of USICA — and therefore the concern of the Commission — is complex and broad. It includes: radio and television broadcasting, publishing, film distribution, exchange programs, trade fairs, schools, libraries, exhibits, information centers, and a worldwide radioteletype network. Exchange activities alone are of many kinds — research, lectures, study, observation, technical training, cultural presentations, sports events, conferences, and interviews. Such activities may be sponsored and funded by governments, private agencies, or both.

Public diplomacy requires the assessment of public attitudes and opinions and a sensitivity to their influence on cross-cultural communications and the development of foreign policy.

The International Communication Agency engages in public diplomacy:

- *When a Fulbright scholar teaches anthropology in India;*
- *When Finland programs the USICA-produced story of Leonard Bernstein on national prime-time television;*
- *When the Voice of America broadcasts to millions of listeners throughout the Soviet Union;*
- *When USICA's exhibit, "America Now," is introduced in Belgrade by Mrs. Mondale as it begins a tour of Eastern Europe;*
- *When Colombian students learn English at a Binational Center in Bogota;*
- *When USICA escorts foreign journalists on tours throughout the United States;*
- *When producers of children's television programs from many countries, sponsored by USICA, convene and exchange experiences with their counterparts in different American cities;*
- *When Japanese economists read USICA's Economic Impact magazine;*
- *When a USICA grant helps Boston to host mayors from more than 40 cities around the world, celebrating urban renaissance and exploring future challenges.*

It is tempting to present a very long list. The point, however, is simple and straightforward; these activities, and so much else, are an integral part of U.S. foreign policy. They help create a world more understanding of the United States and its people and contribute to the development of American understanding of others.

To the Congress and to the President of the United States

In accordance with the requirements of Section 8, Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977, and Public Law 96-60, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy submits herewith its first Report on the International Communication Agency.

Respectfully submitted,



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## Message from the Chairman

On April 1, 1978, the President of the United States, with the approval of Congress, created the International Communication Agency (USICA). At the same time the U.S. Advisory Commission on International Communication, Cultural and Educational Affairs was established with a mandate to serve as public trustee for the new Agency.<sup>1</sup> By July, 1979, all seven commissioners had been appointed. The following October the Congress changed the name of the Commission to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (P.L. 96-60).

The Commission is obligated to report to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of State, and the Director of the Agency concerning USICA, the principal government agency responsible for conducting public diplomacy. The Commission is to assess the policies and programs of the Agency, evaluating the effectiveness with which it carries out its mission. In addition, the Commission has been directed to inform the public, both in the United States and abroad, about USICA and the purposes for which it was created.

Appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, the members of this bipartisan Commission have spent their first full year reviewing America's public diplomacy efforts. Each of us has brought to the task a unique set of perspectives and experiences, and the views set forth in this, our first Report, have been carefully considered.

We have met almost monthly during the past year and have reviewed virtually every aspect of USICA's mission, organization, and program. Members of the Commission have traveled abroad to assess the Agency's field operations.\* The Commission has met regularly with the Director of the Agency and senior members of his staff, as well as with officials in the Department of State, the White House staff, and key members of both houses of Congress. In addition, the Commission has received testimony and recommendations from a number of the organizations in our country that receive funding from USICA and whose work is both supplementary and complementary to the public diplomacy mission of the United States Government.

The Commission has conducted its assessment from two perspectives — the appropriate role of USICA in the conduct of America's foreign affairs and the wise commitment of the taxpayer's dollar. For the purposes of our first Report, we have consciously and selectively focused on those concerns which we believe are of greatest importance to the public diplomacy of the United States during the 1980's.

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\* Sixteen countries have been visited on 15 separate trips. All but three were privately financed.

The Commission is mindful of its obligation to appraise the effectiveness of specific USICA programs and policies. But as we developed our own appreciation of public diplomacy, we concluded that awareness of USICA's mission and increased tangible support for its efforts demand an immediate, separate priority.

Within the United States USICA is relatively unknown. We hope our initial report will introduce the Agency to a wider domestic audience, and bring about greater understanding of and support for its mission.

USICA, as this government's principal resource in public diplomacy, is not a luxury item in the Federal budget. It is indispensable to our national security and warrants far more than existing inadequate levels of support. Public diplomacy is as important to the national interest as is military preparedness, and it ought to be treated with the same degree of concern. We believe that public diplomacy programs can decrease the probability of military involvement.

World events during the past year have had a profound effect on the way Americans view the world and on the way the world views the people of the United States. By using its international communication resources wisely, our country can help to ensure that these views and opinions are accurate and that misperceptions are corrected. It is to the achievement of this end that we submit this Report.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.



## Summary of Recommendations

### Resources

As part of this country's investment in national security, the Congress and the President should increase substantially the resources this nation commits to the conduct of public diplomacy.

- The Commission recommends that USICA's budget be increased by \$200 million.\*
- The Commission recommends that the President raise USICA's personnel ceiling by 30 percent.
- The Commission recommends that Congress and the President exempt public diplomacy activities from government-wide travel reductions.

### Research and Evaluation

USICA's Office of Research, with its focus on foreign public opinion, is critically important to all of the Agency's activities. It should be given independent organizational status, increased funds, and additional responsibility for evaluating program effectiveness.

- The Commission recommends that the Office of Research report directly to the Agency's Director.
- The Commission recommends that the Office of Research be granted an immediate increase of at least 100 percent of its current budget.
- The Commission recommends that the Office of Research assume responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of Agency programs.

### Relationship of USICA to other Foreign Affairs Agencies

The President and the Congress have directed USICA to "insure that our government adequately understands foreign opinion and culture for policy-making purposes." To help fulfill this obligation, the Director of the Agency should be assigned a permanent seat on the National Security Council.

\* Commission member Mrs. Mae Sue Talley dissents from this recommendation pending further review of present expenditures and the magnitude of additional resources recommended.

# **Contents**

## **SECTION I**

### **The Agency**

The Commission is deeply concerned that USICA is relatively unknown, and that its mission is not understood within the United States. Overseas, the Agency is a valued and credible institution, but far too few Americans know what USICA does or why. Even the Voice of America and the Fulbright program, both widely acclaimed, are rarely identified as part of the Agency.

In Section I,

- A. The Agency's tasks are outlined and examples are given of programs designed to carry them out;
- B. The organization of USICA is briefly explained;
- C. An overview of the Agency's first two years is presented.

## **SECTION II**

### **The Commission's Recommendations**

The Commission debated several options concerning the focus of the first set of recommendations. A number of internal Agency issues were raised during the past year, many of which warrant our attention and will be dealt with in later reports. We concluded, however, that the level of support now granted the Agency was of primary importance. It makes little sense to tackle internal Agency problems, advise on specific programs, or assess individual activities when the resources needed for public diplomacy so greatly exceed those available. Our recommendations, therefore, address the problem of basic Agency needs. USICA has been forced to spread too far, with too little, for too long.

In Section II,

- A. The Commission's recommendations are presented;
- B. Issues which the Commission feels warrant further consideration are raised.

## SECTION I

### THE AGENCY

#### Public Diplomacy and the International Communication Agency

American hostages in Iran and Soviet tanks in Afghanistan dramatize the many forces that have fundamentally affected the way we as a nation view ourselves and the world. The manner in which we deal with this kind of world is increasingly dependent on the maturity, the patience, and the understanding we bring to it.

It is critically important to present the policies and diverse culture of the United States to foreign peoples. It is equally important for Americans to acquire a better understanding of the values, cultures, and aspirations of others. Both tasks are the responsibility of USICA as legislated by the Congress.

The Commission's obligation to report on USICA — its programs, its policies, and the effectiveness with which it carries out its responsibilities — was assigned with the implicit assumption that the Agency was a known entity. This has proved to be an invalid assumption. Excluding a handful of Agency supporters in both the executive and legislative branches of government, and excluding the private sector recipients of Agency grants, USICA is virtually unknown in the U.S.

The following brief exposition of USICA's mandate and programs is therefore presented by the Commission as one small step in making the Agency's work better known.

#### A. USICA - The Task

Public diplomacy is basically a continuous communications process. It seeks to inform, to make international understanding more probable, and to influence the worldwide context in which U.S. foreign policy is conducted.

To these ends, the Agency sponsors and funds a wide variety of communications activities. The Voice of America (VOA), USICA's broadcasting element, transmits 820 hours of programming a week in 38 languages to an estimated 80 million listeners.<sup>2</sup> The Agency's educational and cultural exchange programs include the International Visitor (IV) program, the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship program, and the well-known Fulbright exchange program for students, professors, and senior scholars. Media products developed and acquired by USICA include films, videotapes, magazines, exhibits, and a worldwide radioteletype network called the Wireless File. In 205 posts throughout the world, the Agency operates libraries, conducts seminars, teaches English, and facilitates the presentation of programs in the visual and performing arts.

In 125 countries, USICA's principal representative is the Public Affairs Officer (PAO). As part of the embassy's country team, the PAO is responsible for designing and



orchestrating the U.S. Government's public diplomacy programs. Aware of public opinion and sensitive to the culture of the host country, this officer is obliged to identify issues of bilateral concern and to engage foreign publics in a cooperative effort to increase international understanding.

Congress and the President have outlined four basic tasks which comprise the mission of public diplomacy.

**1. USICA is to  
Explain Official  
U.S. Government  
Policies**

There are a variety of ways USICA explains official policies, and the choice made is determined by the subject as well as by the level of awareness and interest on the part of the audience.

Some recent examples:

- *At USICA's request, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Moose responded to questions via telephone from 40 leading Kenyans who had just seen a videotape of his pre-recorded remarks in Nairobi. A local editor stated it was "one of the best things ever to happen to journalism in Kenya." The Assistant Secretary's audience included the Foreign Minister.*
- *A member of Congress was invited by USICA's Public Affairs Officer in Germany to discuss the role of Congress in American foreign policy to a select audience of journalists, scholars, and high-level government officials in Bonn. The host noted that we "need more sessions of this kind to fully comprehend the great complexity of the American situation."*
- *The late Ambassador and former Congressman Allard Lowenstein was programmed by USICA in seminars and conferences throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A typical comment from a Berlin newspaper editor: "Only in America are such political figures as Ambassador Lowenstein bred and only by meeting and questioning men like him can thoughtful Europeans grasp the practical idealism which dictates so much of American policy."*

In addition to these kinds of individual events, the Agency routinely provides press releases and copies of all major U.S. Government statements, transmits the texts and background explanations of documents via radioteletype, and broadcasts official foreign policy commentaries over the Voice of America.

**2. USICA is to Portray American Society to the People of Other Countries as Accurately and Completely as Possible**

USICA sponsors visits to the United States each year of about 2,000 foreign leaders in government, labor and business, science, education, and other fields. Overseas, USICA designs exhibits, conducts seminars, operates American libraries, supports private American cultural presentations, sponsors the teaching of English, and produces and acquires films, videotapes, magazines, and other media products. In American and Binational Centers, USICA sponsors a variety of programs designed to encourage international communication and to develop understanding of American society.

- *One international visitor from Ghana returned home and founded the Visitor Alliance modeled after the League of Women Voters which she had discovered on a short U.S. tour.*
- *Another visitor wrote from Togo: "In 30 days I saw more than in all the rest of my life." He recommended that the Minister of Education go too.*
- *A Japanese newspaper editorial explained: "These (American) Centers are constantly trying to deepen exchanges with local citizens . . . The U.S. is smart enough to send even those scholars who are critical of U.S. policy . . ."*
- *Public exposure to exhibits produced by USICA often exceeds a half-million at non-traveling exhibitions and can reach as many as a million and a half at multi-city showings in the Soviet Union. The Nairobi Daily Nation editorialized that visitors to a recent science and technology exhibit "will see how relevant and appropriate the U.S.-oriented technology is to the needs of a fast-developing Kenya." A Romanian visitor to the "Artist at Work in America" exhibit noted: "This exhibit is America. It shows all of the excitement and creativity which I think of as being American."*
- *Nigeria and Ghana, two important West African countries adapting to civilian forms of government, are now looking to the American system of government as a model. USICA arranged for members and staffs of their parliaments to meet with their Congressional counterparts to study the American legislative system in detail. Scholars and Congressional staff have undertaken extensive visits to both countries. One senior specialist in the Congressional Research Service*

*recently conducted a full week of workshops on legislative procedures for the entire 140-member Parliament of Ghana.*

**3. USICA is to Ensure That the President and the U.S. Government Adequately Understand Foreign Public Opinion and Foreign Cultures**

On a regular basis, the Agency provides the Congress and the Executive branch with:

- (1) analyses of foreign media reactions to world events and to U.S. policies,
- (2) research reports assessing foreign public opinion, and
- (3) comprehensive studies and evaluations of the public diplomacy consequences of U.S. policies.

Overseas, USICA's officers are responsible for the coordination of all press and public affairs aspects of official U.S. representation activities. This includes preparation for official visits by the President, members of Congress, and other government officials, as well as the responsibility to meet the press demands such visits entail. It is the function of the PAO to provide the embassy with assessments of public opinion, including reactions to U.S. policies and major events.

**4. USICA is to Assist in the Development of American Understanding of Other Nations**

While both of USICA's predecessor organizations partially fulfilled this function, the new Agency was specifically given what has come to be called the "second mandate," helping Americans to learn about other societies. The Commission notes that USICA has been responsive to this obligation, but feels that a more definitive program is required. We will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Agency grants are awarded to private groups in the United States to enhance American understanding and competence in world affairs. Among the recipients of these grants are organizations such as the American Council of Young Political Leaders, the YMCA, Partners of the Americas, and Sister Cities International.

An important consequence of the Agency's many exchange programs is the exposure of Americans to different cultures. For example, American families host USICA-sponsored International Visitors, returning Fulbright scholars share their experiences with their colleagues, and exhibits from other countries are shown in American museums.

## **B. USICA - The organization**

The International Communication Agency is an independent agency of the United States Government. It was established April 1, 1978 by President Carter's Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977 as amended and approved by the Congress. The new Agency consolidated the activities of two previously separate predecessor organizations: the United States Information Agency and the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The Director and the Deputy Director are appointed by the President, subject to Senate approval, as are the four principal Associate Directors of USICA:

1. Associate Director for Broadcasting — The Voice of America,
2. Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs,
3. Associate Director for Programs.
4. Associate Director for Management.

## **C. Overview**

Prior to the reorganization, there was considerable concern that either the new Agency's academic programs would become politicized, or that its information, media, and policy functions would be blurred by undue emphasis on education and cultural activities. The Agency's leadership has been sensitive to these fears. To the credit of all involved, the Agency has done much to synthesize and use in a balanced way the great variety of communications tools at its disposal.

Concerns that the new Agency would not have sufficient autonomy were raised during the reorganization by members of Congress and others interested in public diplomacy. USICA now works closely with and takes foreign policy guidance from the Department of State, but its budgetary, personnel, and administrative independence appear to have been maintained.

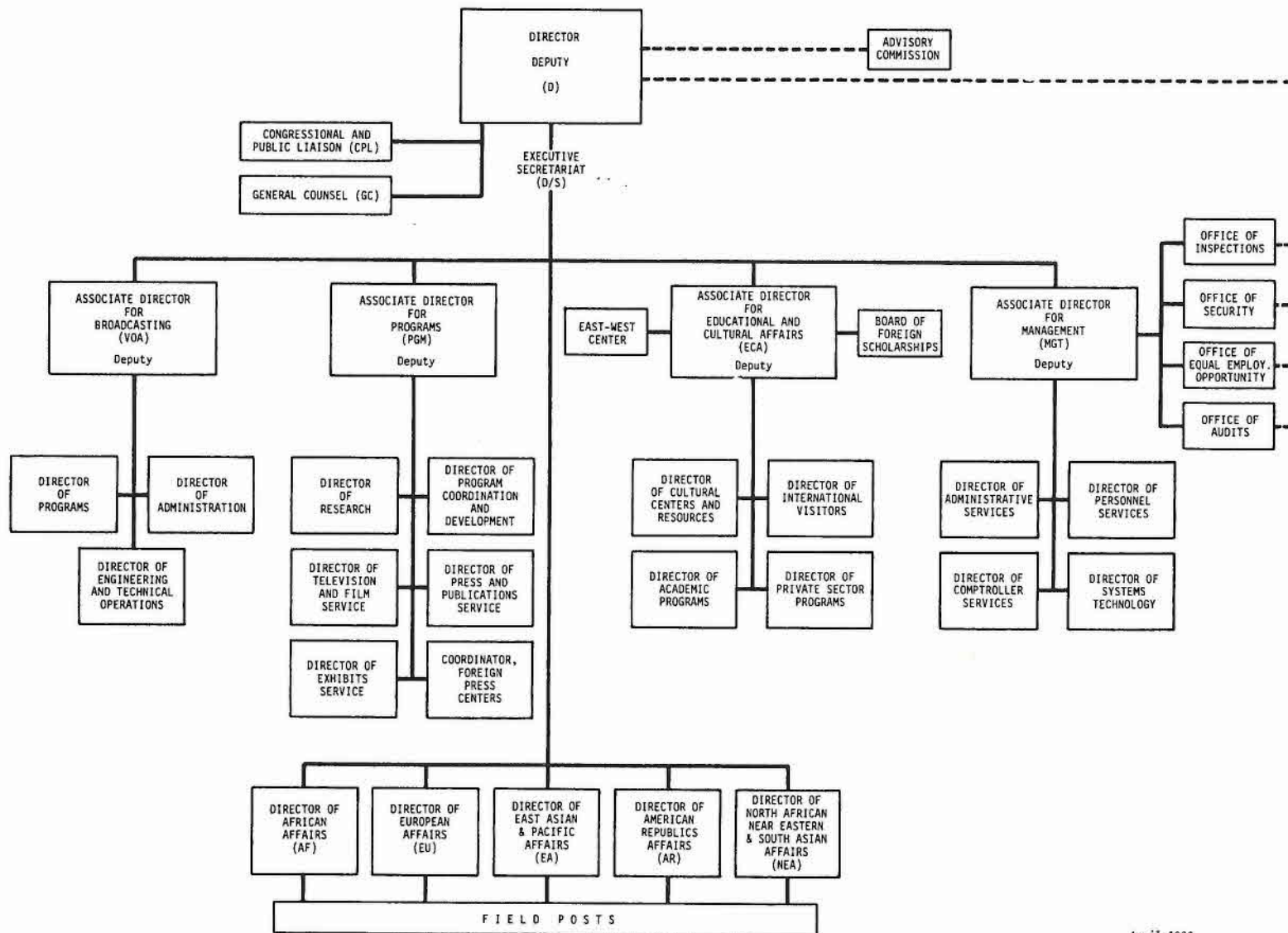
It is imperative that the Agency responsible for presenting the diversity of American opinion, American culture, and American politics enjoy independence from the Department responsible for official foreign policy. The Commission believes that USICA has the degree of autonomy it

needs to accomplish its mission and to protect the integrity of its programs. The Commission is concerned lest the Agency's independence be diluted, as would be the case if USICA's statutorily-based career Foreign Service Information Officer corps were merged with the Foreign Service of the Department of State. Indeed, the Agency's lack of a separate and visible public identity is one of the Commission's concerns.

USICA is now two years old, a short time in the life of any ongoing institution. There are problems within the Agency, many of them the inevitable result of an extensive government reorganization — some of which we will address in later reports. However, the Commission's recommendations which follow have been chosen deliberately to ensure that this new Agency receive the support we feel is minimally required. Without it, many of the internal deficiencies will remain. The Agency cannot continue to respond to increased demands with insufficient resources.



# INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AGENCY (USICA)



April 1980

## SECTION II

### A. Recommendations

*1. As an investment in national security, the Congress and the President should substantially increase the resources this nation commits to the conduct of public diplomacy.*

- *The Commission recommends that USICA's budget be increased by \$200 million.<sup>3</sup>*
- *The Commission recommends that the President raise USICA's personnel ceiling by 30 percent.<sup>4</sup>*
- *The Commission recommends that Congress exempt public diplomacy activities from government-wide travel reductions.*

### Budget

In 1981, the United States will spend \$162 billion on national defense.<sup>5</sup> The proposed FY-1981 budget for USICA is \$448 million<sup>6</sup> — approximately 0.3 percent of what we devote to military spending.

The Commission strongly believes that it is in the national interest to view public diplomacy as an indispensable element in America's national security.

The strength of our country derives as much from the ideas we represent as it does from the military and economic power we exercise in support of those ideas. Soviet dissidents, the mass exodus of Cubans, Cambodians, and Vietnamese to freedom in the U.S., the spread of the human rights movement worldwide are recent manifestations of the power of these ideas.

Current across-the-board military increases are justified in terms of the nation's defense. They are not, however, an exclusive guarantor of national security.

*All of us are concerned — and rightly so — that we not slip into military weakness. We are steadily modernizing our military posture. Yet cutting back our other international programs contributes to another kind of weakness, every bit as dangerous. It cuts back our arsenal of influence. Our support for liberty in the world — our defense of American and Western interests — cannot be mounted with military weapons alone. The battle for American influence in the world requires more than rockets, certainly more than rhetoric. It requires the resources that make our diplomacy effective. Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, addressing the New York Council on Foreign Relations, July 7, 1980.*

*If you give us scholarships, that is far better than giving us 100 tanks . . . While the Soviet Union offers hundreds of scholarships to Yemeni students and military officers, getting scholarships to the United States has been like pulling teeth without anesthesia. A senior advisor to President Saleh of Yemen, quoted in the New York Times, May 7, 1980.*

USICA today is operating in real dollar terms with less than one-half the money the same programs had in the mid-1960's. If it were operating at those levels today, the Agency's budget would approach one billion dollars. Instead, its proposed budget for FY-1981 is \$448 million.

Moreover, United States investment in public diplomacy is low in comparison with that of both our allies and our adversaries. A report issued by the General Accounting Office last year, *The Public Diplomacy of Other Countries: Implications for the United States*, found that in absolute terms the U.S. is outspent by both the Soviet Union and France and is nearly matched by West Germany. France, West Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, and Britain all spend a higher percentage of their national budget on public diplomacy than does the United States.

Country	Cultural and Information Programs as a Percentage of Annual Budget*
France	0.7%
West Germany	0.6%
USSR	0.3%
Japan	0.21%
Britain	0.18%
United States**	0.1%

\*Source: General Accounting Office, 1979

\*\*Includes Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty<sup>7</sup>

USICA is rarely granted new funds to respond to international crises and opportunities, and all too often it is forced to reprogram from existing resources. Because of fiscal constraints, the Agency has been forced to cut vital programs and forgo significant opportunities.

Here are a few recent examples:<sup>8</sup>

- *The Voice of America does not have the funds to convert from the vacuum tube equipment of an earlier generation to the more reliable and cost-effective solid-state systems of today.*
- *The highly successful exchange of persons program has been reduced by almost 50 percent over the past fifteen years.*
- *USICA was forced to divert funds from other important programs to finance long overdue increases in the Voice of America's Persian broadcasts to Iran.*
- *USICA has 32 principal posts in Africa; 18 are staffed by only one American officer.*
- *The \$100,000 cost of evacuating Agency personnel from Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan was taken from USICA's current budget, forcing cuts elsewhere. Unlike the State Department, USICA has no emergency fund.*
- *America Illustrated, the United States Government magazine that is sent to the USSR in exchange for Soviet Life, has lost its impressive size; its editorial content and staff are being reduced.*
- *The Voice of America is just now beginning to broadcast to Afghanistan in Dari; it does not broadcast to Spain in Spanish, to Japan in Japanese . . . .*

On March 3, 1980, then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance told the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations: "Precisely because the world has become a more dangerous place in recent months, we will continue to work to defuse its dangers." Decreasing our military vulnerability is one way to "defuse," but it is not the only way. As Ambassador Fernand Spaak noted on April 21, 1980, speaking for the Commission of the European Communities in the U.S.:

*It is the friendships and understanding that are built between ordinary men and women that will ultimately decide the nature of relations between nations and continents . . . we have to go further and deepen (our) understanding beyond the official and diplomatic level. Our peoples themselves have to know one another better . . . .*

Public diplomacy is in the front line of this effort, and if USICA is to perform effectively it must be given additional resources. The current level of support is simply inadequate.

An-18-year old student of politics from Dublin recently wrote to VOA complaining,

*that it is 100 times easier to tune to Moscow than to the VOA . . . This should be a matter of national security. The propaganda war waged by Radio Moscow is sowing the seeds of Marxist revolution and anti-Americanism among the poor and oppressed . . . It is all the more effective because the voice of truth is weak.*

The \$200 million increased funding we recommend would merely permit the Agency to retain its current share of 0.1% of the total annual United States budget of FY-81, now estimated at \$696 billion. A prudent assessment of our national security needs requires that we do no less.

Can the nation afford:

- *weak VOA signals beamed to Central Asia, Central China, Eastern Europe, and the Near East?* \$70 million
- *not to initiate a modest USICA program in Zimbabwe, supporting the emergence of a new democracy?* \$500,000
- *not to support a major effort to address joint economic concerns through cooperative research with our European allies?* \$500,000
- *not to produce a major exhibit for a tour in China, responding to the special needs of two nations trying to close a thirty-year gap?* \$4 million



- *not to increase the number of USICA officers overseas by 10% in order to strengthen the impact of public diplomacy?* \$10 million
- *not to send Fulbright research scholars to developing countries with which we now have only limited contact and little exchange?* \$5 million
- *not to convert 19 VOA broadcasting studios to solid-state equipment?* \$2 million
- *not to convert from radioteletype to modern word-processing equipment for worldwide transmission of press items?* \$3.5 million
- *not to send our officers overseas with an adequate command of the local language?* \$2.8 million

These are but a few examples.<sup>9</sup> The Commission is not now recommending new programs. It is simply stating that what USICA is required to do demands resources which it currently lacks.

At the Commission's request, some Agency elements have outlined their requirements beyond the limits imposed by OMB and the Director of the Agency. Their persuasive and detailed justifications for increased budgets have clearly identified the severity of USICA's fiscal constraints.

## Personnel

USICA's budget is not its only diminishing resource. Also reduced is public diplomacy's most valuable asset — the American officer overseas and the staff required to render professional support.

Agency officers serving throughout the world provide the most direct, substantive, and effective link between the United States and the groups, organizations, institutions, and leaders in the countries to which they are assigned. Yet due to Federal hiring limitations and employment ceiling reductions, USICA is losing several hundred more positions this year.

The Commission finds this deplorable, not only because of the impact on ongoing programs, but because it continues a fifteen-year trend. In Western Europe alone the number of American and foreign national employees has declined 81% since 1954. USICA's overall employment level has decreased by 30% since 1964.<sup>10</sup> The cumulative impact of these reductions makes prospective cuts impossible to absorb.

Unresolved personnel problems exist in any large organization, in or out of government. This is no less true of USICA. However, the Commission believes that these are, by and large, difficulties apart from the question of sufficient staff. USICA does not have enough people around the world to do well those tasks which it is enjoined by legislation to do.

The Commission recommends that the President raise USICA's personnel ceiling by 30%.

The Commission is also convinced that the quality of USICA's language training must be improved to the point where more officers not only speak but think in the language of the country to which they are assigned. Courses should be designed specifically for USICA's personnel. Comprehension of the nuances and implications of words is requisite to full participation in the world of ideas, opinions, and perceptions of foreign peoples.<sup>11</sup>

### Traveling & Shipping

Pursuant to Public Law 96-86 (1979), the Office of Management and Budget has imposed across-the-board restrictions on government travel and shipping. This applies despite the special needs of the foreign affairs agencies, and despite the existing overall inadequate budget available to USICA.

As a result of these restrictions:

- *There are now several countries where USICA's officers are confined to the capital city.*
- *USICA's book distribution program has been severely curtailed.*
- *Agency engineers are unable to maintain adequately USICA's overseas equipment.*
- *Agency journalists — press and radio — are prohibited from traveling to some of the events on which they must file worldwide reports.*

These are but examples of a depressingly long list. The Commission recommends that the Congress and the Office of Management and Budget exempt public diplomacy activities from these restrictions, and take the necessary measures to correct this setting of program policy by budgetary default.

***2. USICA's Office of Research, with its focus on foreign public opinion, is critically important to all of the Agency's activities. It should be given independent organizational status, additional funds, and assigned the responsibility for evaluating program effectiveness.***

- *The Commission recommends that the Office of Research report directly to the Agency's Director.*
- *The Commission recommends that the Office of Research be granted an immediate increase of at least 100% of its current budget.*
- *The Commission recommends that the Office of Research assume responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of Agency programs.*

The function of research in USICA is to advise the Director concerning foreign public opinion, to assess foreign attitudes toward specific policies and issues, and to evaluate the reasons for them. The Office of Research must identify what people think, and why, determining the basis on which foreign publics have formed their opinions. It should estimate the reaction of foreign publics to policy options under consideration by the Agency and the Administration. Research reports and analyses should become an integral part of Congressional and Executive foreign policy deliberations.

In addition, the Commission believes that the Office of Research should be responsible for assessing program effectiveness. Before the Agency sets policies governing the use of its many communication and exchange programs, the effectiveness of existing programs should be measured. The Office of Research should assume this function, providing substantive data to help management guide the allocation of resources on an Agency-wide basis.

The Commission notes that USICA does support some assessment programs: overseas inspections of Agency posts are conducted periodically; major resource allocation decisions are made annually through the Zero Based Budget (ZBB) process; and a new office has been formed to provide Agency managers with access to computer-based records of an estimated 20,000 separate items or services produced by

USICA each year. However, the Agency must establish an independent evaluation staff within the Office of Research to identify what works, where it works, and why.

At present the Office of Research is required to filter its proposals and results through too many bureaucratic layers. The validity of research and its utility require maximum independence. In order to eliminate undue controls from external sources, the Office of Research should report directly to the Agency's Director.<sup>12</sup>

The research budget for USICA represents 0.6% of the Agency's total allocation. The paucity of funds for contract research studies (less than \$700,000) has forced the Office to limit its major efforts to only 14 countries worldwide. Foreign public opinion trends are not routinely available, and important surveys are not undertaken because of budget restrictions. In addition, social scientists in USICA are unable to travel within the U.S. with sufficient frequency to remain in touch with other scholars engaged in relevant research, and too often they are excluded from participating in international seminars because of travel cuts.

The Office of Research should be granted an immediate increase of at least 100% of its current budget. There should be far more studies initiated by USICA, such as the one recently headlined in *The Washington Post*:

*STUDY SEES DANGER IN SOVIETS' INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND U.S.*

*Soviet inability to comprehend the workings of the American system is currently producing a "dangerous" perception gap between the two nations, according to an unusual U.S. government research study.*

*At a time of exceptional tension between Moscow and Washington, the study found, "The situation is dangerous precisely because Soviet experts themselves tend to believe that they in fact understand American society". . .*

*These findings emerge from a unique research project sponsored by the U.S. International Communication Agency.*  
Murrey Marder, *Washington Post*, July 11, 1980

The methodology was unique, the findings were surprising, and deliberations on the implications for U.S. foreign policy are now going on at the highest levels of government. This kind of effort should be routine for USICA, providing crucial insights and perspectives all too often absent in the government's decision-making process.

Many Agency officers are not sufficiently aware of research as an indispensable policy and program guide. There are too many instances in which research is not utilized because of ignorance of social science research capabilities. Junior officers should be rotated through the Research Office on a regular basis, thereby assuring a worldwide cadre of research-sensitive officers in the years to come.

***3. The Commission recommends that the Director of USICA be assigned a permanent seat on the National Security Council.***

USICA is required to "insure that our government adequately understands foreign opinion and culture for policy-making purposes."<sup>13</sup> To do so, the Agency must become a full participant rather than just an occasionally-consulted observer in the foreign policy decision-making process.

USICA's professionals communicate beyond the sphere of traditional diplomacy. In the countries to which they are assigned Agency officers meet daily with students and educators, journalists and artisans, government officials and political leaders in and out of power. The Agency assesses foreign public opinions, public attitudes, trends, and developments. Overseas, USICA's expertise is acknowledged and used. Most U.S. ambassadors are aware of the unique contributions the Agency makes to the development of strong bilateral ties between the U.S. and other nations.

In Washington, this is all too frequently not the case. Increasingly, U.S. foreign policy decisions must reflect a greater sensitivity to foreign cultures, to foreign public opinions, perceptions, and priorities. USICA has this sensitivity which should be considered in deliberations at the highest level. Congress and the President have jointly determined that USICA's Director shall serve as "the principal advisor to the President, the National Security Council and the Secretary of State."<sup>13</sup>

Only as a member of the National Security Council can the Director fulfill this obligation regularly and effectively.



## **B. Additional Observations**

The Commission's most urgent concern remains the inadequate resources available to USICA. However, the following issues warrant mention in this Report as important areas to which further attention must be directed.

### **1. UNESCO**

Freedom of the press, one of democracy's fundamental values, finds expression internationally in the final act of the Helsinki accords (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in UNESCO General Conference statements. The exercise of this freedom in today's world is increasingly dependent on technological and professional capability.

Industrialized nations have a superior capacity to collect and distribute information, and this superiority has been challenged by many developing countries as inhibiting their ability to tell their stories, in their words, from their perspectives, both internally and externally.

The Commission believes it is in the national interest, as well as in the interest of other countries, for the United States to assist in fashioning a free and equitable flow of information worldwide. USICA's role in past U.S. commitments to address the current imbalances has yet to be adequately defined, and the Commission notes that while there has been some progress, it is not nearly enough.

### **2. Domestic Dissemination**

One of USICA's predecessors — the U.S. Information Agency — was legislatively prohibited from making any of its products designed for overseas use available within the United States.<sup>14</sup> When USICA was created, this prohibition was inherited. At the time of its formation, however, USICA was given responsibility for enhancing the ability of Americans to understand other cultures.<sup>15</sup> Pending further study, the Commission does not now recommend the removal of the old prohibition, but it does suggest that the issue be reexamined by Congress and the Agency. There is a need to assess the products USICA creates, and to harmonize what may be an archaic rule with the public's right of access to government data.

### **3. USICA's Audience**

The Agency's policy toward international audiences is necessarily mixed. The Voice of America reaches a mass audience, as do major exhibits and press placement efforts in foreign countries. However, many other Agency

endeavors are focused on carefully chosen leaders and opinion-makers in each country. The Commission suggests that budget restrictions and personnel limitations play an inordinately decisive role in determining the Agency's audience policy. Both USICA and the Congress are urged to explore the necessity of reaching a greater number of people worldwide and to allocate funds accordingly.

#### **4. Budget Autonomy**

The relationship between USICA and the State Department is intended to permit maximum independence for the Agency, while avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort or expenditure overseas. A recent letter from the retiring OMB official responsible for all foreign affairs and defense agency budgets recommended serious interference with USICA's fiscal independence. The Commission is reluctant to see budgetary authority affecting USICA delegated to the Secretary of State. This would likely, in the Commission's view, unnecessarily compromise the autonomy USICA must have to fulfill its mission. The intent of Congress was clear: USICA is to receive official U.S. policy guidance from the Secretary of State, but USICA constitutes an independent agency of the United States Government — responsible to the President.

#### **5. Personnel**

Alluded to in the recommendations is the Commission's concern about the personnel situation in USICA, apart from the fact that there are simply not enough people. The Commission is not, at this time, prepared to identify discrete problems and to pose appropriate suggestions for their solution.

However, we do want to register our awareness of the fact that morale among some Agency employees is low, and that, in our opinion, the reorganization of 2-1/2 years ago can no longer be cited as cause. There are administrative problems internally.

We believe this subject to be of such fundamental importance that further study is required.

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This report contains the Commission's evaluation of the need for USICA. As taxpayers, citizens, and informed advisors, we present our unanimous conviction that USICA is an unknown but indispensable partner in the national security effort, one that we, as a nation, can no longer afford to ignore.

## NOTES

1. Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977.
2. This is merely an estimate of VOA's audience. Prior to the opening of China, some 75 million people were thought to tune in VOA's programs. The "80 million listeners" may be, in fact, many more.
3. The Commission's intention is to identify the order of magnitude of funds required. The \$200 million would merely permit the Agency to fulfill current tasks with adequate resources.
4. The Commission wishes to provide the Agency with the personnel required to respond to present needs, both overseas and in Washington. If VOA needs six additional language specialists, the Agency should no longer be required to transfer positions from another important area. When a new post is opened abroad, another post should not have to reduce its efforts to accommodate.
5. The Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 1981 (p.552).
6. The Agency's FY-81 budget request, as amended, House Doc. 96-294.
7. Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) are totally separate from USICA, and do not serve the same function as the Voice of America. Governed by the independent Board for International Broadcasting (BIB), RFE and RL beam in several local languages to Eastern Europe only, serving not as an official voice of America, but as surrogate mass media in countries where there is no free press.
8. These examples have been provided to the Commission by Agency personnel, and are documented in transcribed briefings or official memoranda.
9. These figures represent Agency assessments of costs arrived at through normal fiscal procedures.
10. In 1964, the total employment figure for USICA's predecessors — the United States Information Agency (12,183) and the State Department's Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs (405) — was 12,588. The current ceiling for USICA is 8,671.
11. A recent GAO report further details this need for improved language training: *More Competence in Foreign Languages Needed by Federal Personnel Working Overseas*, April 15, 1980 (ID-80-31).
12. The General Counsel reports directly to the Director as does the Office of Congressional and Public Liaison. See chart on p. 15.
13. Memo from President Carter to the Director of USICA, March 13, 1978, and Executive Order 12048, March 27, 1978.
14. P.L. 80-402, sec. 501 (Title 22, USC, sec. 1461). U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, as amended.
15. Memo from President Carter to the Director of USICA, March 13, 1978.
16. Memo of June 13, 1980, to U.S. representatives of foreign affairs, defense, and national security elements from Edward Jayne II.

For additional information, please write:

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